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The Speculative Palate: Culinary Memory and Diasporic Histories in Fictional Futures

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Abstract

This research paper examines how speculative fiction engages with food as a mnemonic device, historiographical archive, and cultural repository to encode diasporic histories in the face of ecological catastrophe and social upheaval. Through a close reading of Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* (2009), Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993), and Ursula K. Le Guin's *Always Coming Home* (1985), the paper discusses the idea of the "speculative palate" where recipes, foraging, seeds, and rituals encode memory, resistance, and futurity against the forgetting of capitalist amnesia. Engaging with gastronomy studies, memory studies, diaspora studies, and speculative estrangement, the paper proposes a culinary historiography as a form of counter-archive of embodied continuity. Atwood's Gods Gardeners engage in biopolitical resistance through seed-saving and posthuman care; Butler's Afrofuturist seeds reflect trauma even as they produce Earthseed ethics; Le Guin's Kesh feasts mirror utopian abundance through ethnographic ritual. Speculative food fictions serve social imaginaries, modelling sustainability, interdependence, and hope for displaced futures. Those edible stories do not facilitate the cultural forgetting, but they give expression to the ethics of care and sustainability. In conclusion, the theorized research will reveal how speculative food narratives serve to not only feed bodies, but social imaginaries in order to create futures in remembrance, continuity and hope.

Keywords: Diaspora; Culinary Memory; Speculative Fiction; Historiography; Cultural Continuity.